

An important update of the guidebook to Augusta Raurica

Simone Mayer

LUDWIG BERGER, mit Beiträgen von Th. Hufschmid, einem Gemeinschaftsbeitrag von S. Ammann, L. Berger und P.-A. Schwarz und einem Beitrag von U. Brombach, *FÜHRER DURCH AUGUSTA RAURICA* (7. Aufl. des von Rudolf Laur-Belart begründeten *Führers durch Augusta Raurica*; Schwabe Verlag, Basel 2012). Pp. 392, colour figs. 389, folded map. ISBN 978-3-7965-2841-5.

The volume under review is the 7th edition of the “Guidebook to Augusta Raurica”, a series that was started by the late R. Laur-Belart in 1937 to summarize knowledge about the Roman colony. Although still styled a guidebook, it has become the most important, indeed a rather expansive, summary about the Roman city. In a change from previous editions, references to further literature have been introduced, allowing researchers to find more information on a specific subject more easily.¹

A small map on the inside of the front cover shows the visible Roman structures within modern-day Augst and Kaiseraugst, along with small symbols for parking lots and similar facilities. In the table of contents and next to the headings of certain chapters, small ‘eye-symbols’ signal the ruins shown on the orientation map so as to facilitate on-the-spot access to information about a structure or topic. The text itself is structured in major chapters about general topics or specific areas of the town, whereas subsections focus on specific buildings or structures. All the sections have been revised and the latest discussions and ideas incorporated; indeed, some chapters relating to the main research projects have been significantly extended since the previous edition of 1998.

The theatres and amphitheatre

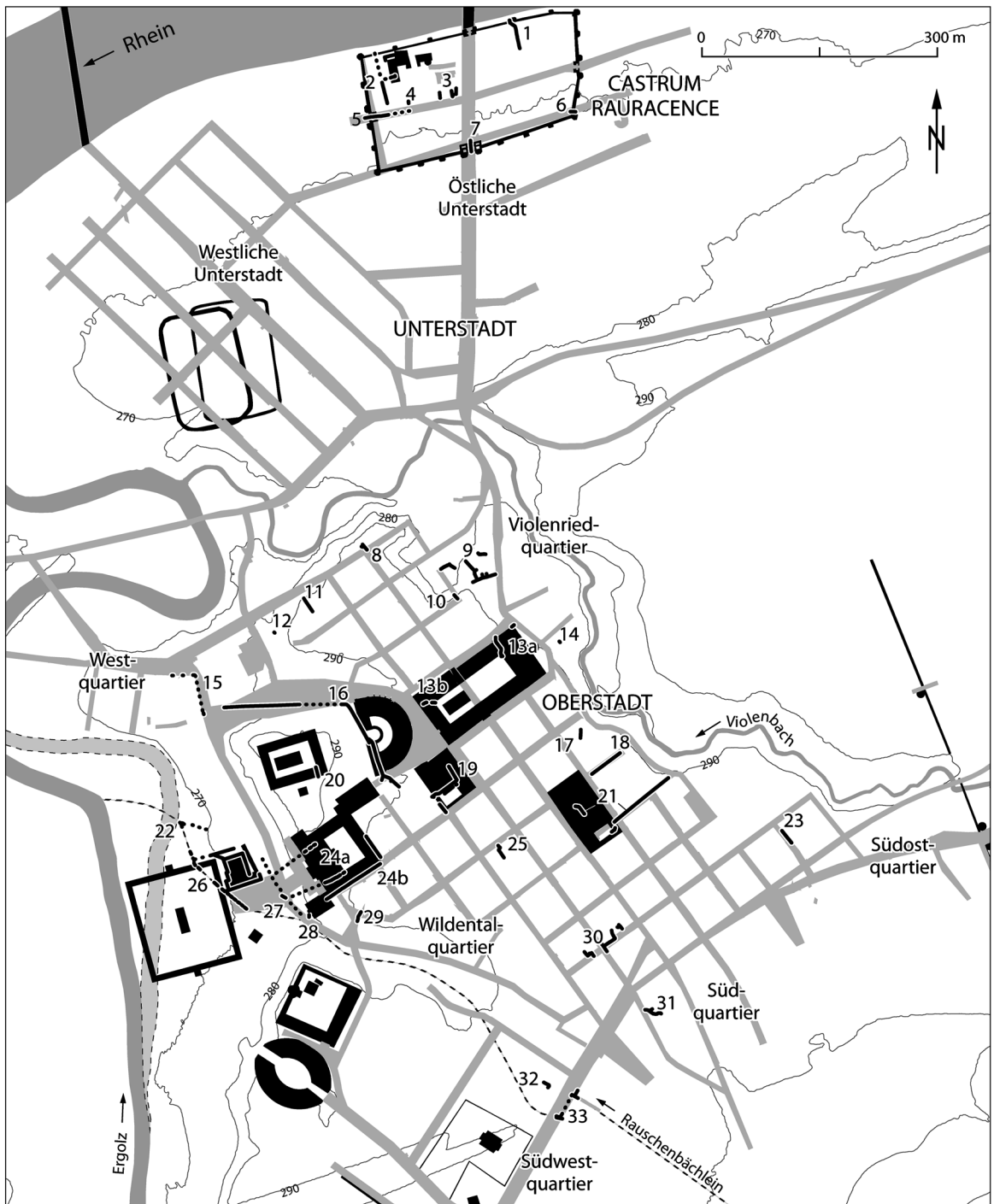
The chapter about the theatre Neun-Türme (79-117) is written by Thomas Hufschmid, who has published elsewhere his research on the three successive theatre structures.² Following further excavations associated with a project of reconstruction, new conclusions about the separate structures and their chronology are described here in detail. A first “szenisches Theater” was built in c.A.D. 70/80, possibly corresponding to the construction of the Schönbühl temple. This date is much later than was previously suggested. The second theatre, a half-amphitheatre with an elliptical arena but only a semicircle of seating, was erected in c.110. The final phase is the *skene* dating to c.180/190, its reconstruction here illustrated by an elaborate three-dimensional drawing (fig. 102). It is unclear when the theatre fell out of use, although references point to its complete abandonment before 230. Recently, previously unknown structures from the settlement on the same site that predated the theatre, as well as some structures in front of the theatre, have been excavated, rounding out the site’s history.

Hufschmid, who has also recently published a three-volume study on the amphitheatre,³ again wrote the chapter about this monument, providing the latest results on the different structures in some detail (118-30). The amphitheatre was built at the end of the 2nd c. A.D. to

1 There are very few texts in English on Augusta Raurica. For a general summary, but lacking information on the most recent research, see B. Rütli, *Model town – town model. Begleitheft zur Ausstellung im Römermuseum Augusta Raurica, die im März 2010 eröffnet wurde* (Augst 2010); and B. Pfäffli, *A short guide to Augusta Raurica* 8 (Augst 2010) = *Kurzführer Augusta Raurica. Archäologischer Führer durch Augst/Kaiseraugst* 6.

2 Th. Hufschmid and G. Matter, “Das römische Theater von Augst: Sanierungs- und Forschungsarbeiten 2001,” *Jahresberichte aus Augst und Kaiseraugst* [=JbAK] 23 (2002) 121-45; Th. Hufschmid and I. Horisberger-Matter, “Das römische Theater von Augst: Sanierungs- und Forschungsarbeiten 2005,” *JbAK* 27 (2006) 155-79; iid., “*Ipsius autem theatri conformatio: sic est facienda ...*”. 16 Jahre Forschung und Restaurierung im römischen Theater von Augst,” *JbAK* 29 (2008) 161-225.

3 Th. Hufschmid, mit Beiträgen von Ph. Rentzel, N. Frésard and M. E. Fuchs, *Amphitheatrum in provincia et Italia. Architektur und Nutzung römischer Amphitheater von Augusta Raurica bis Puteoli* (Forschungen in Augst 43, 2009). See the review by D. L. Bomgardner in *JRA* 25 (2012) 831-41.



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| 1 Frühchristliche Kirche, 1960.004 | 12 Insula 1, 1976.052 | 23 Insula 53, 1971.053 |
| 2 Rheinthermen, 1975.012, 1995.002 | 13a Hauptforum, Area publica, 1912.056, 1927.052 | 24a Südforum, 1925.053, 1927–1928.053 |
| 3 Region 20W, 1976.004 | 13b Hauptforum, Area sacra, vor 1937 | 24b Südforum, Merkurstrasse, 1925.053, 1927–1928.053, 2001.069 |
| 4 Region 20W, 1974.005 | 14 Region 7E, 1976.053 | 25 Insula 30, 1959–1962.051 |
| 5 Westtor Kastell, 1975.008 | 15 Region 9D, 1975.051, 2006.051 | 26 Heilbad Grienmatt, 1803.062, 1914–1916.062 |
| 6 S-O-Ecke Kastell, 1890.002, 1983.006 | 16 Theater, 1899.059, 2006.107 | 27 Region 8, 1923.056 |
| 7 Südtor Kastell, 1933.006 | 17 Insula 27, 2004–2005.054 | 28 Region 8, 1980.052 |
| 8 Region 9B, 1927.052 | 18 Insula 27, 2006.106 | 29 Westrandstrasse, 2001.051 |
| 9 Insula 8, 1933–1934.057, 1997–2000.060 | 19 Frauenthermen, 1937–1938.051 | 30 «Palazzo», Insulae 41/47, 42/78, 1972–1974.053 |
| 10 Insula 7, 1941.051 | 20 Schön Bühntempel, 1917.061 | 31 «Mansio», Region 5C, 1963–1968.051 |
| 11 Insula 1, 1919.052 | 21 Zentralthermen, 1942–1943.051 | 32 Region 4D, 1967.055 |
| | 22 Region 8, 1915.062 | 33 Rauschenbächlein Westtorstrasse, 1967.055 |
- Kanal ergänzt - - - - - Gewässer ergänzt

replace the half-amphitheatre at Neun-Türme that was again transformed into a “szenisches Theater” at the time. Certainly one of the main reasons for construction of the new amphitheatre was its larger capacity, accommodating 13,000 instead of 8,000 spectators. Due to intense erosion and stone-robbing in late antiquity, the chronology especially regarding its abandonment remains unclear.

Religious buildings and baths

As far as religious buildings are concerned, conservation work was done at the Schönbühl temple (131-38), which is connected to the “szenisches Theater”. It remains unclear which deities were worshipped in the older temple from the first half of the 1st c. A.D., where a portico is now confirmed. The more recent podium temple, built in the late 1st c. A.D., is now suggested to have been a sanctuary for the cult of the emperor, discarding earlier theories concerning a cult for Mercury. An interesting new section of the guidebook provides an overview of the history of research at the site, beginning with the first excavations by A. Ryff in the late 16th c. The sacred area at Sichelen, with its three different temples in use between the beginning of the 1st and the 3rd c. A.D., is proposed as a possible central sanctuary for the local population of the *Raurici* (174-82), but it remains unclear if this cult would have endured after construction of the first temple at Schönbühl.

The three larger baths in the city consist of the women’s baths, the central baths, and a private bath in Violenried. With no major excavations since their discovery in 1937, the women’s baths (147-53) are still famous for their mosaic floors set within the earliest clay-and-wood construction dating to Claudian times. The central baths (153-58) have been studied only in some small excavations in 1942 and 1989 and remain largely unknown except for their mosaic floors. More interesting is the new section of text about the baths connected to a well house in Violenried. It was conserved after its discovery and excavation in 1997/98 and is now one of the main attractions (158-62; 263-67). These baths, probably built in the first half of the 2nd c. A.D., might have been a private institution. The underground well house was reached through a tunnel which is still intact. Since the walls of the well itself were built up to ground level, the underground room was an unnecessary addition as it was built to scoop the water from the surface. The shaft of the well was filled with destruction debris from the baths. Beneath that debris, a layer containing skeletal parts from dogs, horses and humans was found, as well as parts of a column and c.6000 clay moulds for counterfeit *denarii* and *antoniniani* dating to the first half and the middle of the 3rd c. and providing a *terminus post quem* for the baths’ destruction. At the bottom of the well, 5 *bucrania* (ox skulls) and the remains of ravens and sea eagles were found, inviting further theories on how to interpret its filling in. The groundwater at the base of the well contains traces of sulphide, which may suggest a link to the temple at Grienmatt with its possible healing baths (162-66). That sanctuary in the Grienmatt area (166-74) is not very well known but at least some of the new finds seem to confirm the notion that it was dedicated to Apollo, being connected to the bath with a possible therapeutic purpose.

The upper town

The artisanal and living quarters in the upper town (183-225) were arranged in *insulae*, many of which have been excavated and published, most recently *Insula 50* by S. Straumann,⁴ and the guidebook describes the structures for each *insula* separately. In general, the earliest wooden structures date to 6 B.C. and were replaced by stone buildings between A.D. 50 and 70; the latest destruction layers date to 275. The different *insulae* showed the presence of different crafts such as meat-smoking, bronze-casting, wood-carving, and traces of a probable school for gladiators and a physician’s house. The rich mosaic floors and wall-paintings as found, for example, in *insula 28*⁵ point to high living standards in this part of the town. A large section is dedicated to *insulae 1* and *2* on the so-called Kastelen plateau, where the castle was built in c.270. A whole section (226-30) is dedicated to the *taberna* in *insula 5/9* by P.-A. Schwarz and

4 S. Straumann, *Die Nordwestecke der Insula 50 von Augusta Raurica. Entwicklung eines multifunktional genutzten Handwerkerquartiers* (Forschungen in Augst 47, 2011).

5 D. Schmid, *Die römischen Mosaiken aus Augst und Kaiseraugst* (Forschungen in Augst 17, 1993).

S. Ammann, who published their research in 2011.⁶ Most importantly, they question the function of the *taberna* (previously interpreted as a bakery on the ground floor and a guard-house on the upper floor) and suggest a more differentiated workshop and living quarters, with a possible storeroom for scrap metal.

The “outer quarters” (“Aussenquartiere”) of the upper town housed the main crafts and workshops of the colony (232-53). In the first half of the 1st c. A.D. mainly pottery workshops were situated in the SW quarter, to be replaced by private houses with mosaics and baths around A.D. 50, as has been demonstrated by R. Schatzmann.⁷ There are also indications for leather production. The main street was designed for heavy traffic. Several destructive fires seem to have taken place in late antiquity.

The southern and western quarters

The southern quarter, mainly published in 2006 by S. Fünfschilling,⁸ holds several buildings of unknown function and a proposed *mansio*. Public excavations, open to schoolchildren and interested amateurs, take place in the still-largely-unknown SE quarter. The best-known structure is the E Gate, which possibly lost its importance after the 1st c. A.D. since construction work in the area seems to have ceased too. The western quarter was possibly a market area; the main road seems to open onto a square, while a second open piazza yielded many *stili*, published by V. Schaltenbrand-Obrecht in 2012.⁹

The lower town

In the surrounding lower town, the living and working quarters have only recently become a focus of research. Some new information about these structures is provided in the guidebook, even if research is still ongoing. Most of the new conclusions on the W part of the lower town (284-93) have not yet been published by the scholars involved, but extended living quarters, along with pottery and glass workshops, have been discovered. A very large building from the 4th c. A.D. provides a first hint about the suburbs near the castle in late antiquity. A well that was found in 1980 contained skeletons of humans, horses, donkeys and dogs, reviving the debate about a connection to Germanic raids during the 3rd c. The workshop complex known as Schmidmatt, described in a separate section by St. Wyss,¹⁰ shows the re-use of partly destroyed structures during the 4th c. (305-11). In the E part of the lower town no complete building has been excavated thus far, but many single walls suggest longhouses, as found in the other residential quarters (293-300). The structures beneath the later *castrum* (300-304) are not well-known, since chronological differentiations are still lacking for the older excavations. In general, the buildings seem to date to the 1st c. A.D. The area was destroyed by a fire in the middle of the 3rd c., but unusual finds such as ivory tokens and the bones of wild game and chicken suggest an affluent neighbourhood here from c.200. A much-discussed structure of the late 2nd and early 3rd c. might point to a religious sanctuary. On top of all these structures a layer of construction débris and mortar was deposited to serve as the foundation for the *castrum* (317-35). Structures in front of the *castrum* include a possible small bath from c.350, several wooden buildings including a possible pit house from the 7th c., and several quarries for extracting the local shell limestone.

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- 6 S. Ammann and P.-A. Schwarz, mit Beiträgen von E. Marti-Grädel *et al.*, *Eine Taberna in Augusta Raurica. Ein Verkaufsladen, Werk- und Wohnraum in Insula 5/9. Ergebnisse der Grabungen 1965-1967 und 2002* (Forschungen in Augst 49, 2011).
 - 7 R. Schatzmann, mit einem Beitrag von D. Schmid, *Das Südwestquartier von Augusta Raurica. Untersuchungen zu einer städtischen Randzone* (Forschungen in Augst 33, 2003).
 - 8 S. Fünfschilling, mit Beiträgen von M. Schaub und V. Serneels, *Das Quartier “Kurzenbettli” im Süden von Augusta Raurica* (Forschungen in Augst 35, 2006).
 - 9 V. Schaltenbrand Obrecht, mit Beiträgen von M. L. Fernández *et al.*, *Stilus. Kulturhistorische, typologisch-chronologische Untersuchungen an römischen Schreibgriffeln von Augusta Raurica und weiteren Fundorten* (Forschungen in Augst 45, 2012).
 - 10 The subject is currently being treated by St. Wyss in his doctoral thesis at the University of Bern: *Schmidmatt, ein Quartier der Unterstadt an der Fernstrasse Gallien-Raetien* [working title].

The castrum

Many new excavations have taken place in the *castrum* itself, although not all of them are published or even reviewed yet. Inside the *castrum*, built around A.D. 300, several smaller layers of burnt destruction in the older buildings might be evidence for the insecure times of the 3rd c. Several buildings continued to exist nonetheless and were included in the newly built *castrum*. The new buildings were oriented along the *castrum* wall. There might have been an attack during the Germanic raids after A.D. 350, since burnt material containing coins of that period was found at the W Gate. The main buildings known from the second half of the 4th c. A.D. were a *principia*, the baths on the Rhine, and a *horreum*. A first Christian church, recently published by G. Faccani,¹¹ who also wrote the separate section in the guidebook (335-40), was built after 350. Above the late-antique structures, a layer of tile débris was interpreted as the foundations for the Early Medieval settlement on the spot. Only one clay floor was found so far, its finds dating to the 6th c.

In addition to the main chapters detailing new research, the guidebook provides information on smaller structures or largely unknown parts of Augusta Raurica that hitherto have been described only in annual reports or not published at all, such as the tile ovens and clay quarries found in front of the eastern city walls. Other particularly promising finds are:

- a second, so-called "southern" forum (139-42), possibly constructed in the late 1st c. A.D.;
- the sewer and water-supply systems and latrines within the colony, excavated to some extent but known only from scattered reports (253-63, 267-72, 272-74);
- structures on the German side of the Rhine, only partly known and mostly excavated prior to the mid-20th c. (341-42).

An interesting discussion is ongoing concerning the exact number and location of the proposed bridges over the Rhine (36-39), as well as a potential harbour (284), not yet found but strongly suspected.

A military camp dating from before A.D. 70 in the lower town (282-84) proves the presence of the army before construction of the *castrum*.

The new edition of this guidebook on the history of Augusta Raurica from the 1st to the 21st c. A.D. thus gives an up-to-date summary of research spanning the last 400 years. In addition to providing easy access to the scholarly literature, of particular importance are the summaries of various theories and suggestions regarding newly excavated structures. The vast programme of excavation and research at the city facilitates a general overview of all aspects of life in a provincial Roman city, while new data and emerging discussions about late-antique structures and the transition to mediaeval should stimulate further examination of those periods in other parts of the NW provinces.

simone.mayer@unibas.ch

Leonhardsgraben 46, CH-4051 Basel

11 G. Faccani, mit Beiträgen von P. Frey et al., *Die Dorfkirche St. Gallus in Kaiseraugst/AG. Die bauliche Entwicklung vom römischen Profangebäude zur heutigen christkatholischen Gemeindekirche* (Forschungen in Augst 42, 2012).